Julian the Apostate

(3 November 361 – 26 June 363)

BRIEFING

Julian (Latin: *Flavius Claudius Julianus*; Ancient Greek: Ἰουλιανός *Ioulianos*; 331 – 26 June 363) was the Caesar of the West from 355 to 360 and Roman emperor from 361 to 363, as well as a notable philosopher and author in Greek. His rejection of Christianity, and his promotion of Neoplatonic Hellenism in its place, caused him to be remembered as **Julian the Apostate** in the Christian tradition.

A nephew of Constantine the Great, Julian was one of few in the imperial family to survive the purges and civil wars during the reign of Constantius II, his cousin. Julian became an orphan as a child after his father was executed in 337, and spent much of his life under Constantius's close supervision. However, the emperor allowed Julian freedom to pursue an education in the Greek-speaking east. In 355, Constantius II summoned Julian to court and appointed him to rule Gaul. Julian was successful in his rule, defeating and counterattacking Germanic raids across the Rhine and encouraging the provinces' return to prosperity. In 360, he was proclaimed emperor by his soldiers at Lutetia (Paris), sparking a civil war with Constantius. However, Constantius died before the two could face each other in battle, having named Julian as his successor to prevent further bloodshed.

In 363, Julian embarked on an ambitious campaign against the Sasanian Empire. The campaign was initially successful, securing a victory outside Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia. However, he did not attempt to besiege the capital. Julian instead moved into Persia's heartland, but he soon faced supply problems and was forced to retreat northwards while being ceaselessly harassed by Persian skirmishers. During the Battle of Samarra, Julian was mortally wounded. He was succeeded by Jovian, a senior officer in the imperial guard, who was obliged to cede territory, including Nisibis, in order to save the trapped Roman forces. Julian and Jovian were the last sole emperors to rule the whole Empire for their entire reign, after which it was permanently divided between a Western and Eastern court.

Julian was the last non-Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, and he believed that it was necessary to restore the Empire's ancient Roman values and traditions in order to save it from dissolution. He purged the top-heavy state bureaucracy, and attempted to revive traditional Roman religious practices at the expense of Christianity. His efforts to build a Third Temple in Jerusalem were probably intended to harm Christianity rather than please Jews. Julian also forbade Christians from teaching and learning classical texts.

EARLY LIFE

Julian, whose full name was Flavius Claudius Julianus, was born at Constantinople, probably in 331, into the family of the reigning emperor, Constantine I, and was the first attested individual to be born in that city after its refounding. His father was Julius Constantius, Constantine's younger half-brother, and his mother was a Bithynian noble named Basilina, daughter of a high-ranking bureaucrat, Julianus, who had served as praetorian prefect and head of government under the late emperor Licinius. Julian's mother died shortly after he was born, and he spent his childhood in Constantinople, forming a lasting attachment to the city. Julian was probably raised with Greek as his first language, and, being the nephew of Rome's first Christian emperor, he was brought up under the Christian faith.

In the turmoil after the death of Constantine in 337, in order to establish himself and his brothers, Julian's cousin Constantius II appears to have led a massacre of most of Julian's close relatives. Constantius II allegedly ordered the murders of many descendants from the second marriage of Constantius Chlorus and Theodora, leaving only Constantius and his brothers Constantine II and Constans I, and their cousins, Julian and Constantius Gallus (Julian's half-brother), as the surviving males related to Emperor Constantine. Constantius II, Constans I, and Constantine II were proclaimed joint emperors, each ruling a portion of Roman territory. Julian and Gallus were excluded from public life, were strictly guarded in their youth, and given a Christian education. They were likely saved by their youth. If Julian's later writings are to be believed, Constantius would later be tormented with guilt at the massacre of 337.

Initially growing up in Bithynia, raised by his maternal grandmother, at the age of seven Julian was under the guardianship of Eusebius, the semi-Arian Christian Bishop of Nicomedia, and taught by Mardonius, a Gothic eunuch, about whom he later wrote warmly. After Eusebius died in 342, both Julian and Gallus were transferred to the imperial estate of Macellum in Cappadocia. Here Julian met the Christian bishop George of Cappadocia, who lent him books from the classical tradition. At the age of 18, the exile was lifted and he dwelt briefly in Constantinople and Nicomedia. He became a lector, a minor office in the Christian church, and his later writings show a detailed knowledge of the Bible, likely acquired in his early life.

Julian's conversion from Christianity to paganism happened at around the age of 20. Looking back on his life in 362, Julian wrote that he had spent twenty years in the way of Christianity and twelve in the true way, i.e., the way of Helios. Julian began his study of Neoplatonism in Asia Minor in 351, at first under Aedesius, the philosopher, and then Aedesius' student Eusebius of Myndus. It was from Eusebius that Julian learned of the teachings of Maximus of Ephesus, whom Eusebius criticized for his more mystical form of Neoplatonic theurgy. Eusebius related his meeting with Maximus, in which the theurgist invited him into the temple of Hecate and, chanting a hymn, caused a statue of the goddess to smile and laugh, and her torches to ignite. Eusebius reportedly told Julian that he "must not marvel at any of these things, even as I marvel not, but rather believe that the thing of the highest importance is that purification of the soul which is attained by reason." In spite of Eusebius' warnings regarding the "impostures of witchcraft and magic that cheat the senses" and "the works of conjurers who are insane men led astray into the exercise of earthly and material powers", Julian was intrigued, and sought out Maximus as his new mentor. According to the historian Eunapius, when Julian left Eusebius, he told his former teacher "farewell, and devote yourself to your books. You have shown me the man I was in search of."

Constantine II died in 340 when he attacked his brother Constans. Constans in turn fell in 350 in the war against the usurper Magnentius. This left Constantius II as the sole remaining emperor. In need of support, in 351 he made Julian's half-brother, Gallus, caesar of the East, while Constantius II himself turned his attention westward to Magnentius, whom he defeated decisively that year. In 354 Gallus, who had imposed a rule of terror over the territories under his command, was executed. Julian was summoned to Constantius' court in Mediolanum (Milan) in 354, and held for a year, under suspicion of treasonable intrigue, first with his brother and then with Claudius Silvanus; he was cleared, in part because Empress Eusebia intervened on his behalf, and he was permitted to study in Athens (Julian expresses his gratitude to the empress in his third oration). While there, Julian became acquainted with two men who later became both bishops and saints: Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil the Great. In the same period, Julian was also initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, which he would later try to restore.

CAESAR IN GAUL

After dealing with the rebellions of Magnentius and Silvanus, Constantius felt he needed a permanent representative in Gaul. In 355, Julian was summoned to appear before the emperor in Mediolanum and on 6 November was made *Caesar* of the West, marrying Constantius' sister, Helena. Constantius, after his experience with Gallus, intended his representative to be more a figurehead than an active participant in events, so he packed Julian off to Gaul with a small retinue, assuming his prefects in Gaul would keep Julian in check. At first reluctant to trade his scholarly life for war and politics, Julian eventually took every opportunity to involve himself in the affairs of Gaul. In the following years he learned how to lead and then run an army, through a series of campaigns against the Germanic tribes that had settled on both sides of the Rhine.

Campaigns against Germanic Kingdoms

During his first campaign in 356, Julian led an army to the Rhine, where he engaged the inhabitants and recovered several towns that had fallen into Frankish hands, including Colonia Agrippina (Cologne). With success under his belt he withdrew for the winter to Gaul, distributing his forces to protect various towns, and choosing the small town of Senon near Verdun to await the spring. This turned out to be a tactical error, for he was left with insufficient forces to defend himself when a large contingent of Franks besieged the town and Julian was virtually held captive there for several months, until his general Marcellus deigned to lift the siege. Relations between Julian and Marcellus seem to have been poor. Constantius accepted Julian's report of events and Marcellus was replaced as *magister equitum* by Severus.

The following year saw a combined operation planned by Constantius to regain control of the Rhine from the Germanic peoples who had spilt across the river onto the west bank. From the south his *magister peditum* Barbatio was to come from Milan and amass forces at Augst (near the Rhine bend), then set off north with 25,000 soldiers; Julian with 13,000 troops would move east from Durocortorum (Rheims). However, while Julian was in transit, a group of Laeti attacked Lugdunum (Lyon) and Julian was delayed in order to deal with them. This left Barbatio unsupported and deep in Alamanni territory, so he felt obliged to withdraw, retracing his steps. Thus ended the coordinated operation against the Germanic peoples.

With Barbatio safely out of the picture, King Chnodomarius led a confederation of Alamanni forces against Julian and Severus at the Battle of Argentoratum. The Romans were heavily outnumbered[iv] and during the heat of battle a group of 600 horsemen on the right wing deserted, yet, taking full advantage of the limitations of the terrain, the Romans were overwhelmingly victorious. The enemy was routed and driven into the river. King Chnodomarius was captured and later sent to Constantius in Mediolanum. Ammianus, who was a participant in the battle, portrays Julian in charge of events on the battlefield and describes how the soldiers, because of this success, acclaimed Julian attempting to make him Augustus, an acclamation he rejected, rebuking them. He later rewarded them for their valor.

Rather than chase the routed enemy across the Rhine, Julian now proceeded to follow the Rhine north, the route he followed the previous year on his way back to Gaul. At Moguntiacum (Mainz), however, he crossed the Rhine in an expedition that penetrated deep into what is today Germany, and forced three local kingdoms to submit. This action showed the Alamanni that Rome was once again present and active in the area. On his way back to winter quarters in Paris he dealt with a band of Franks who had taken control of some abandoned forts along the river Meuse.

In 358, Julian gained victories over the Salian Franks on the Lower Rhine, settling them in Toxandria in the Roman Empire, north of today's city of Tongeren, and over the Chamavi, who were expelled back to Hamaland.

Taxation and Administration

At the end of 357 Julian, with the prestige of his victory over the Alamanni to give him confidence, prevented a tax increase by the Gallic praetorian prefect Florentius and personally took charge of the province of *Belgica Secunda*. This was Julian's first experience with civil administration, where his views were influenced by his liberal education in Greece. Properly it was a role that belonged to the praetorian prefect. However, Florentius and Julian often clashed over the administration of Gaul. Julian's first priority, as *Caesar* and nominal ranking commander in Gaul, was to drive out the barbarians who had breached the Rhine frontier. He sought to win over the support of the civil population, which was necessary for his operations in Gaul, and also to show his largely Germanic army the benefits of Imperial rule. Julian therefore felt it was necessary to rebuild stable and peaceful conditions in the devastated cities and countryside. For this reason, Julian clashed with Florentius over the latter's support of tax increases, as mentioned above, and Florentius's own corruption in the bureaucracy.

Constantius attempted to maintain some modicum of control over his *Caesar*, which explains his removal of Julian's close adviser Saturninius Secundus Salutius from Gaul. His departure stimulated the writing of Julian's oration, "Consolation Upon the Departure of Salutius".

Rebellion in Paris

In the fourth year of Julian's stay in Gaul, the Sassanid emperor, Shapur II, invaded Mesopotamia and took the city of Amida after a 73-day siege. In February 360, Constantius II ordered more than half of Julian's Gallic troops to join his eastern army, the order by-passing Julian and going directly to the military commanders. Although Julian at first attempted to expedite the order, it provoked an insurrection by troops of the *Petulantes*, who had no desire to leave Gaul. According to the historian Zosimus, the army officers were those responsible for distributing an anonymous tract expressing complaints against Constantius as well as fearing for Julian's ultimate fate. Notably absent at the time was the prefect Florentius, who was seldom far from Julian's side, though now he was kept busy organizing supplies in Vienne and away from any strife that the order could cause. Julian would later blame him for the arrival of the order from Constantius. Ammianus Marcellinus even suggested that the fear of Julian gaining more popularity than himself caused Constantius to send the order on the urging of Florentius.

The troops proclaimed Julian *Augustus* in Paris, and this in turn led to a very swift military effort to secure or win the allegiance of others. Although the full details are unclear, there is evidence to suggest that Julian may have at least partially stimulated the insurrection. If so, he went back to business as usual in Gaul, for, from June to August of that year, Julian led a successful campaign against the Attuarian Franks. In November, Julian began openly using the title *Augustus,* even issuing coins with the title, sometimes with Constantius, sometimes without. He celebrated his fifth year in Gaul with a big show of games.

In the spring of 361, Julian led his army into the territory of the Alamanni, where he captured their king, Vadomarius. Julian claimed that Vadomarius had been in league with Constantius, encouraging him to raid the borders of Raetia. Julian then divided his forces, sending one column to Raetia, one to northern Italy and the third he led down the Danube on boats. His forces claimed control of Illyricum and his general, Nevitta, secured the pass of Succi into Thrace. He was now well out of his comfort zone and on the road to civil war. (Julian would state in late November that he set off down this road "because, having been declared a public enemy, I meant to frighten him [Constantius] merely, and that our quarrel should result in intercourse on more friendly terms...")

However, in June, forces loyal to Constantius captured the city of Aquileia on the north Adriatic coast, an event that threatened to cut Julian off from the rest of his forces, while Constantius's troops marched towards him from the east. Aquileia was subsequently besieged by 23,000 men loyal to Julian. All Julian could do was sit it out in Naissus, the city of Constantine's birth, waiting for news and writing letters to various cities in Greece justifying his actions (of which only the letter to the Athenians has survived in its entirety). Civil war was avoided only by the death on 3 November of Constantius, who, in his last will, is alleged by some sources to have recognized Julian as his rightful successor.

REIGN

On 11 December 361, Julian entered Constantinople as sole emperor and, despite his rejection of Christianity, his first political act was to preside over Constantius' Christian burial, escorting the body to the Church of the Apostles, where it was placed alongside that of Constantine. This act was a demonstration of his lawful right to the throne. He is also now thought to have been responsible for the building of Santa Costanza on a Christian site just outside Rome as a mausoleum for his wife Helena and sister-in-law Constantina.

The new Emperor rejected the style of administration of his immediate predecessors. He blamed Constantine for the state of the administration and for having abandoned the traditions of the past. He made no attempt to restore the tetrarchal system begun under Diocletian, nor did he seek to rule as an absolute autocrat. His own philosophic notions led him to idealize the reigns of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. In his first panegyric to Constantius, Julian described the ideal ruler as being essentially *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"), operating under the same laws as his subjects. While in Constantinople, therefore, it was not strange to see Julian frequently active in the Senate, participating in debates and making speeches, placing himself at the level of the other members of the Senate.

He viewed the royal court of his predecessors as inefficient, corrupt and expensive. Thousands of servants, eunuchs and superfluous officials were therefore summarily dismissed. He set up the Chalcedon tribunal to deal with the corruption of the previous administration under the supervision of *magister militum* Arbitio. Several high-ranking officials under Constantius, including the chamberlain Eusebius, were found guilty and executed. (Julian was conspicuously absent from the proceedings, perhaps signalling his displeasure at their necessity.) He continually sought to reduce what he saw as a burdensome and corrupt bureaucracy within the Imperial administration whether it involved civic officials, secret agents or the imperial postal service.

Another effect of Julian's political philosophy was that the authority of the cities was expanded at the expense of the imperial bureaucracy as Julian sought to reduce direct imperial involvement in urban affairs. For example, city land owned by the imperial government was returned to the cities, city council members were compelled to resume civic authority, often against their will, and the tribute in gold by the cities called the *aurum coronarium* was made voluntary rather than a compulsory tax. Additionally, arrears of land taxes were cancelled. This was a key reform reducing the power of corrupt imperial officials, as the unpaid taxes on land were often hard to calculate or higher than the value of the land itself. Forgiving back taxes both made Julian more popular and allowed him to increase collections of current taxes.

While he ceded much of the authority of the imperial government to the cities, Julian also took more direct control himself. For example, new taxes and corvées had to be approved by him directly rather than left to the judgement of the bureaucratic apparatus. Julian certainly had a clear idea of what he wanted Roman society to be, both in political as well as religious terms. The terrible and violent dislocation of the 3rd century meant that the Eastern Mediterranean had become the economic locus of the Empire. If the cities were treated as relatively autonomous local administrative areas, it would simplify the problems of imperial administration, which as far as Julian was concerned, should be focused on the administration of the law and defense of the empire's vast frontiers.

In replacing Constantius's political and civil appointees, Julian drew heavily from the intellectual and professional classes, or kept reliable holdovers, such as the rhetorician Themistius. His choice of consuls for the year 362 was more controversial. One was the very acceptable Claudius Mamertinus, previously the Praetorian prefect of Illyricum. The other, more surprising choice was Nevitta, Julian's trusted Frankish general. This latter appointment made overt the fact that an emperor's authority depended on the power of the army. Julian's choice of Nevitta appears to have been aimed at maintaining the support of the Western army which had acclaimed him.

Clash with the Antiochenes

After five months of dealings at the capital, Julian left Constantinople in May and moved to Antioch, arriving in mid-July and staying there for nine months before launching his fateful campaign against Persia in March 363. Antioch was a city favored by splendid temples along with a famous oracle of Apollo in nearby Daphne, which may have been one reason for his choosing to reside there. It had also been used in the past as a staging place for amassing troops, a purpose which Julian intended to follow.

His arrival on 18 July was well received by the Antiochenes, though it coincided with the celebration of the Adonia, a festival which marked the death of Adonis, so there was wailing and moaning in the streets—not a good omen for an arrival.

Julian soon discovered that wealthy merchants were causing food problems, apparently by hoarding food and selling it at high prices. He hoped that the curia would deal with the issue for the situation was headed for a famine. When the curia did nothing, he spoke to the city's leading citizens, trying to persuade them to take action. Thinking that they would do the job, he turned his attention to religious matters.

He tried to resurrect the ancient oracular spring of Castalia at the temple of Apollo at Delphi. After being advised that the bones of 3rd-century bishop Babylas were suppressing the god, he made a public-relations mistake in ordering the removal of the bones from the vicinity of the temple. The result was a massive Christian procession. Shortly after that, when the temple was destroyed by fire, Julian suspected the Christians and ordered stricter investigations than usual. He also shut up the chief Christian church of the city, before the investigations proved that the fire was the result of an accident.

When the curia still took no substantial action in regards to the food shortage, Julian intervened, fixing the prices for grain and importing more from Egypt. Then landholders refused to sell theirs, claiming that the harvest was so bad that they had to be compensated with fair prices. Julian accused them of price gouging and forced them to sell. Various parts of Libanius' orations may suggest that both sides were justified to some extent; while Ammianus blames Julian for "a mere thirst for popularity".

Julian's ascetic lifestyle was not popular either, since his subjects were accustomed to the idea of an all-powerful Emperor who placed himself well above them. Nor did he improve his dignity with his own participation in the ceremonial of bloody sacrifices. David Stone Potter said after nearly two millennia:

> *They expected a man who was both removed from them by the awesome spectacle of imperial power, and would validate their interests and desires by sharing them from his Olympian height [...] He was supposed to be interested in what interested his people, and he was supposed to be dignified. He was not supposed to leap up and show his appreciation for a panegyric that it was delivered, as Julian had done on January 3, when Libanius was speaking, and ignore the chariot races.*

He then tried to address public criticism and mocking of him by issuing a satire ostensibly on himself, called Misopogon or "Beard Hater". There he blames the people of Antioch for preferring that their ruler have his virtues in the face rather than in the soul.

Julian's fellow pagans were of a divided mind about this habit of talking to his subjects on an equal footing: Ammianus Marcellinus saw in that only the foolish vanity of someone "excessively anxious for empty distinction", whose "desire for popularity often led him to converse with unworthy persons".

On leaving Antioch he appointed Alexander of Heliopolis as governor, a violent and cruel man whom the Antiochene Libanius, a friend of the emperor, admits on first thought was a "dishonourable" appointment. Julian himself described the man as "undeserving" of the position, but appropriate "for the avaricious and rebellious people of Antioch".

Persian Campaign

Julian's rise to *Augustus* was the result of military insurrection eased by Constantius's sudden death. This meant that, while he could count on the wholehearted support of the Western army which had aided his rise, the Eastern army was an unknown quantity originally loyal to the Emperor he had risen against; and though he had tried to woo it through the Chalcedon tribunal, to solidify his position in the eyes of the eastern army, he needed to lead its soldiers to victory. A campaign against the Sassanid Persians offered such an opportunity.

An audacious plan was formulated, the goal of which was to lay siege to the Sassanid capital city of Ctesiphon and definitively secure the eastern border. Yet the full motivation for this ambitious operation is, at best, unclear; there was no direct necessity for an invasion, as the Sassanids sent envoys in the hope of settling matters peacefully. Julian rejected this offer. Ammianus states that Julian longed for revenge on the Persians and that a certain desire for combat and glory also played a role in his decision to go to war.

Arriving to Mesopotamia

On 5 March 363, despite a series of omens against the campaign, Julian departed from Antioch with about 65,000–83,000, or 80,000–90,000 men (the traditional number accepted by Gibbon is 95,000 effectives total), and headed north toward the Euphrates. En route he was met by embassies from various small powers offering assistance, none of which he accepted, though he did order the Armenian King Arsaces to muster an army and await instructions. He crossed the Euphrates near Hierapolis and moved eastward to Carrhae, giving the impression that his chosen route into Persian territory was down the Tigris. For this reason it seems he sent a force of 30,000 soldiers under Procopius and Sebastianus further eastward to devastate Media in conjunction with Armenian forces. This was where two earlier Roman campaigns had concentrated and where the main Persian forces were soon directed. Julian's strategy lay elsewhere, however. He had had a fleet built of over 1,000 ships at Samosata in order to supply his army for a march down the Euphrates and of 50 pontoon ships to facilitate river crossings. Procopius and the Armenians would march down the Tigris to meet Julian near Ctesiphon. Julian's ultimate aim seems to have been "regime change" by replacing king Shapur II with his brother Hormisdas.

After feigning a march further eastward, Julian's army turned south to Circesium at the confluence of the Abora (Khabur) and the Euphrates arriving at the beginning of April. Passing Dura on 6 April, the army made good progress, bypassing towns after negotiations or besieging those which chose to oppose him. At the end of April the Romans captured the fortress of Pirisabora, which guarded the canal approach from the Euphrates to Ctesiphon on the Tigris. As the army marched toward the Persian capital, the Sassanids broke the dikes which crossed the land, turning it into marshland, slowing the progress of the Roman army.

Siege of Pirisabora

The **siege of Pirisabora** took place when the Roman Emperor Julian besieged the fortified city of Pirisabora under Mamersides in April 363.

After two days of fierce fighting, the Sasanians and the citizens abandoned the circuit walls and took up a defensive position in the acropolis. After some failed attempts, the Romans began to construct a siege tower, after which Mamersides reached a compromise with Julian to hand over the fort in exchange for a safe withdrawal. Julian subsequently pillaged and burned the abandoned city.

Background

After settling political affairs in Constantinople, Emperor Julian gathered an army of 95,000 in Antioch for his invasion of the Sassanid Empire. Upon his arrival at Carrhae, Julian sent his generals, Procopius and Sebastianus, with 30,000 men into Armenia to join up with Arshak II's army of 24,000. At the same time the main body under Julian himself wheeled south, reaching the Euphrates at Callinicum, whence he directed his march south-east along the river towards Ctesiphon, the winter capital of the Sassanids.

The Siege and Aftermath

Having accepted the submission of Anah and other important cities of Assyria during the course of his march through the province, Julian at length arrived before the walls of Pirisabora, a city 50 miles from Ctesiphon. Garrisoned by a strong detachment of the Persians under Mamersides (per Ammianus), or Momoseiros (per Zosimus), the city maintained a stout defense. However, the walls were soon reduced by the siege engines of the Roman emperor, and the garrison, which retired to an inner citadel while the enemy commenced the sack of the city, was soon after brought to surrender, after a mere two day siege. Pirisabora was burnt and mercilessly ravaged by the soldiery, who well remembered the treatment of the Persians towards Amida, after its capture four years previously (A.D. 359). The spoils of the city were distributed by Julian to the Army. Following this victory, the Roman army marched towards Ctesiphon, sacking and burning Bithra, Diacira and Ozogardana in the process.

Julian later saw the bodies of Mamersides's kinsmen near Seleucia. They were apparently killed by the Sasanians in revenge for Mamersides's surrender.

Siege of Maiozamalcha

During the siege of Maiozamalcha (or Maogamalcha), 8 May 363 CE, the Roman army under Emperor Julian stormed, pillaged, and destroyed the city of Maiozamalcha, before continuing onward to the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon.

Background

In the year 363 the Roman Emperor Julian, hoping to avenge Roman defeats under his predecessor Constantius II and to establish his fame by accomplishing what had never been done by a Roman before - the subjugation of the east - invaded the dominions of Shapur II, king of Persia.

Assembling his strength at Carrhae in the Roman province of Mesopotamia, Julian divided his forces. While a part of the army (30,000 men, according to Ammianus Marcellinus) was dispatched north-east under his cousin Procopius and Count Sebastian to enlist the aid of Arshak II of Armenia for a march down the Tigris to Ctesiphon; Julian himself, with a larger force (65,000), penetrated Assyria to the south, proceeding along the Euphrates from Callinicum with the same ultimate destination.

Julian crossed the frontier at Circesium, where it had been established by the peace of Diocletian, leaving a detachment of 10,000 to secure his rear. In response to the Roman's invasion, Sasanian cavalry harried his wings, and the dykes and canals were released to flood the country, the land was scorched. However, these obstacles were surmounted. Anah surrendered and was burned, Macepracta was subdued, and after a journey of five days Julian's army came upon the city of Hit. Its soldiers had fled and the city, containing mostly women and children were slaughtered. Pirisabora was reduced, sacked, and its inhabitants massacred. The day following the fall of Pirisabora, a Roman reconnaissance unit was surprised and defeated in an ambush. Julian removed its commanders from their positions of authority. As the Romans approached the Tigris, they discovered a city that had been deserted by its Jewish residents, and the soldiers set it on fire.

Julian promptly arrived under the walls of Maiozamalcha on 8 May, a strongly fortified place 11 miles from the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon. A cursory reconnaissance of the city walls by Julian was attacked by a small contingent of Sasanians, nearly killing the emperor.

The Siege

The first day of the siege, Roman artillery launched volleys of arrows and stones, but without success. The Romans took heavy casualties and the oppressive heat began to take its toll. As evening approached, the exhausted troops pulled back. During the siege, Julian's forces faced a temporary setback when the Sasanians managed to launch a raid from the city walls, targeting the Romans' cattle.

On the second day, the assault on the walls was repelled by a vigorous Sasanian defense, meanwhile a tunnel was surreptitiously dug under the very feet of defenders thanks to Julian's engineers. Not waiting for the next day, Julian ordered his forces into the tunnel. The city was instantly captured from the inside out with no mercy shown towards the astonished defenders or populace.

Aftermath

The Sasanid garrison commander Nabdates and eighty of his men were captured and brought to Julian. He spared their lives. The fall of Maiozamalcha yielded a wealth of spoils, which was divided among Julian's troops. Afterwards, the city was burned and reduced to ruins.

Ctesiphon

By mid-May, the army had reached the vicinity of the heavily fortified Persian capital, Ctesiphon, where Julian partially unloaded some of the fleet and had his troops ferried across the Tigris by night. The Romans gained a tactical victory over the Persians before the gates of the city, driving them back into the city. However, the Persian capital was not taken. Concerned with the risk of becoming encircled and trapped within the city's walls, master-general Victor ordered his soldiers not to enter the open gates of the city in pursuit of the defeated Persians. Resultantly, the main Persian army was still at large and approaching, while the Romans lacked a clear strategic objective. In the council of war which followed, Julian's generals persuaded him not to mount a siege against the city, given the impregnability of its defenses and the fact that Shapur would soon arrive with a large force. Julian, not wanting to give up what he had gained and probably still hoping for the arrival of the column under Procopius and Sebastianus, set off east into the Persian interior, ordering the destruction of the fleet. This proved to be a hasty decision, for they were on the wrong side of the Tigris with no clear means of retreat and the Persians had begun to harass them from a distance, burning any food in the Romans' path. Julian had not brought adequate siege equipment, so there was nothing he could do when he found that the Persians had flooded the area behind him, forcing him to withdraw. A second council of war on 16 June 363 decided that the best course of action was to lead the army back to the safety of Roman borders, not through Mesopotamia, but northward to Corduene.

Battle of Ctesiphon

The Battle of Ctesiphon took place on 29 May 363 between the armies of Roman Emperor Julian and an army of the Sasanian Empire (during Shapur II's reign) outside the walls of the Persian capital Ctesiphon. The battle was a Roman victory, but eventually the Roman forces found themselves unable to continue their campaign as they were too far from their supply lines.

Background

On November 3, 361, Constantius II died in the city of Mopsucrene, leaving his cousin Flavius Claudius Julianus, known to history as Julian the Apostate, as sole emperor of Rome. Arriving at Constantinople to oversee Constantius' burial, Julian immediately focused on domestic policy and began to greatly reform the Roman imperial government by reorganizing, streamlining, and reducing the bureaucracy.

Turning next to foreign policy, Julian saw the previously unchecked military incursions of Shapur II of Persia against the Eastern Roman provinces as posing the greatest external threat. After many failed earlier attempts, the Persian king launched a more successful second campaign against the Romans and captured Amida in 359, controlling the headwaters of the Tigris and the entrance to Asia Minor from the east. A Roman offensive was desperately needed to halt Shapur.

With Julian's reputation and exploits during his years as Caesar and general of Gaul preceding him, Shapur preferred to negotiate a peace treaty with the intrepid young Julian. Believing it to be incumbent on himself to produce a more permanent settlement in the East, Julian responded to Shapur's calls for peace by saying that the Persian king would be seeing him very soon and began preparing for an expedition against the Sassanid dynasty, collecting all his legions and marching east from Constantinople. Carefully planning and crafting his Persian campaign for over a year, Julian transferred his capital and forward base for the coming war to Antioch, Syria in the summer of 362 and on March 5, 363, set out with 65,000–83,000, or 80,000–90,000 men, while Shapur, along with the main Persian army, *spah*, was away from Ctesiphon. Per his devised plan of attack, Julian sent 18,000 soldiers under the command of his maternal cousin Procopius to Armenia, with the aim of obtaining support from the King of Armenia for a clever and not looked-for double pincer movement against Shapur.

Battle

Seeing Julian successfully march into his dominions, Shapur ordered his governors to undertake a scorched earth policy until he reached the Sassanid capital, Ctesiphon, with the main Persian army. However, after a few minor skirmishes and sieges Julian arrived with his undefeated army before Shapur II to the walls of Ctesiphon on May 29.

Outside the walls a Persian army under Merena was formed up for battle across the Tigris. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, the Persian army featured cataphracts (*clibanarii*), backed up by infantry in very close order. Behind them there were war elephants.

Julian's force attempted to set foot on the opposite shore of Tigris, under harassment by the Persians. After achieving it, the main battle commenced. It was a stunning tactical victory for the Romans, losing only 70 men to the Persians' 2,500 men. One of the Christian sources and not one friendly to the pagan Julian, Socrates Scholasticus, even states that Julian's victories up to this point in the campaign had been so great that they caused Shapur to offer Julian a large portion of the Persian domains if he and his legions would withdraw from Ctesiphon. But Julian rejected this offer out of desire for the glory of taking the Persian capital and defeating Shapur in battle which would earn him the honorific of *Parthicus*. However, Julian lacked the equipment to lay siege to the strongly fortified Ctesiphon, and the main Sassanid army, commanded by Shapur and far larger than the one just defeated, was closing in quickly. Also critical was the failure of Procopius to arrive with the 18,000 detachment of the Roman army that could have aided Julian in crushing Shapur's approaching force as he had intended. For as previously captured satraps had testified after being fairly treated by Julian, the capture or death of Shapur would have compelled the Persian city to open its gates to the new Roman conqueror. While Julian was in favor of advancing further into Persian territory, he was overruled by his officers. Roman morale was low, disease was spreading, and there was very little forage around.

Aftermath

Reluctantly, Julian agreed to retreat back along the Tigris and look for Procopius and the other half of his army that had failed to coordinate the double-pincers movement with him outside of Ctesiphon as had been planned. On 16 June 363, the retreat began. Ten days later, after an indecisive Roman victory at Maranga, the army’s rearguard came under heavy attack, in the Battle of Samarra. Not even pausing to put on his armour, Julian plunged into the fray shouting encouragement to his men. Just as the Persians were beginning to pull out with heavy losses, Julian was struck in the side by a flying spear. He died before midnight, on June 26, 363. Ultimately the campaign failed and the Romans were forced to ask for peace under unfavourable terms.

Battle of Maranga

The Battle of Maranga occurred in 363, shortly after the Battle of Ctesiphon. The Romans repelled a Sasanian attack while sustaining minimal losses. However, the army's lack of supplies continued to threaten the army, and soon afterwards the emperor Julian was killed at the Battle of Samarra.

Background

After defeating the Persians in battle on the banks of the Tigris and surrounding the capital, Ctesiphon, Julian soon became convinced of his inability to take the city. The apparent impregnability of Ctesiphon, along with his desire to defeat Shapur the Persian king in battle, resolved Julian to abandon the siege. The river fleet which had accompanied the march of the army was abandoned to the flames, and Julian, relying on the fertility of the country for provisions for the troops, ordered the baggage train to be burnt, only 20 days' supplies being preserved. The army then proceeded inland, guided by native captives, who however took care to supply the emperor with misinformation and faulty councils, while Shapur fired the country, harassed the enemies' scouts, and dexterously eluded his main army. Incapable of forcing a battle, Julian fell back on the Tigris, resolved on a retreat north-westwards to the Roman province of Corduene, before his scanty and rotting provisions should run out.

Battle

The Persians, who had assembled a very numerous army, now closed upon the rear of the Romans. Julian's march was continually harassed, and the fighting at Maranga reached the proportions of a battle. Although the Persians were rebuffed and Julian's retreat was enabled to proceed, the losses were considerable on his side as well, and the retardation of his march contributed to weakening the army whose provisions were on the verge of giving out.

Aftermath

The subsequent death of Julian in the action of Samarra, which was similarly a tactical success for the Romans, contributed to lower the morale of the troops, and the emperor Jovian, whom they elected in the camp as Julian's successor, was brought by the threat of famine and the Persian army to conclude a disgraceful peace with Shapur II, conceding all the gains of the treaty of Diocletian (298), and important border fortresses such as Nisibis and Singara, as well.

Battle of Samarra

The Battle of Samarra took place in June 363, during the invasion of the Sasanian Empire by the Roman emperor Julian. After marching his army to the gates of Ctesiphon and failing to take the city, Julian, realizing his army was low on provisions and in enemy territory started marching towards Samarra.

The battle began as a Sasanian attack on the Roman rearguard, but developed into a major battle. Julian was wounded during the battle, and later died without choosing a successor. Following Julian's death, the Romans elected Jovian as emperor. Stranded deep in Sasanian territory and suffering from a lack of supplies, Jovian was forced to accept terms for peace.

Julian's Campaign

Julian invaded the Sasanian Empire with a force of 95,000 men, hoping to secure the eastern frontier and to replace Shah Shapur II with his brother Hormisdas. He split his force in two, one under his cousin Procopius numbering 30,000 men, which marched to northern Mesopotamia, and the other consisting of 65,000 men under his own leadership. Julian at first won a tactical victory outside Ctesiphon, but his army was too distracted with pillaging to take the city. Julian burned the fleet which he had brought down the river to Ctesiphon, and much of the baggage, leaving a bare three weeks supply. He then directed his march inland into the heart of Shapur's dominions, hoping to force a battle.

Battle

By June 363, Julian, realizing that he was trapped in Sasanian territory, started marching his army towards Samarra. The Roman army was under constant attack and Julian was informed the Sasanians were harassing the rear guard. Julian rode back, not waiting to don his breastplate, and when he arrived at the rear guard was told the left flank was under cavalry attack reinforced by elephants.

Riding towards the left flank, Julian rallied retreating Roman troops. The Sasanians seeing the Romans reforming started to retreat. Emboldened by this, Julian called for his troops to follow after him, and he charged toward the fleeing Sasanians. By this time his bodyguards, who were separated from Julian, called for him to pull back. At this point, Julian was struck in the side by a spear and fell from his horse. His bodyguards surrounded him, carried him back, and the army quickly pitched camp. Julian died from his wound at midnight.

According to Dignas and Winter, the Romans won this battle, while Touraj Daryaee states the Sasanian forces won the battle.

Aftermath

Julian had refrained from naming a successor, and the commanders assembled at dawn for the election. The honor was extended to the prefect Salutius, but he refused. Their choice then spontaneously settled on Jovian, the commander of Julian's domestic guard, whose father had been a general in the same service. He resumed the retreat along the east bank of the Tigris, continuously harassed from the Sasanians.

After four further days of struggling on, the demoralized army finally came to a halt at Dura, where they attempted to construct a bridge to cross the river, but failed to do so, and were surrounded on all sides by the Sasanian army. Jovian clearly saw that the situation was now desperate. Unexpectedly, the envoys of Shapur II arrived in his camp bearing offers of peace, and Jovian, who during the halt had exhausted his provisions, grasped eagerly at any venue of extricating the army from its dire situation. Thus he was forced to accept humiliating terms from Shapur, in order to save his army and himself from complete destruction. According to the treaty with Shapur, Jovian agreed to a thirty-year truce, a withdrawal from the five Roman provinces, Arzamena, Moxoeona, Azbdicena, Rehimena and Corduena, and to allow the Sasanians to occupy the fortresses of Nisibis, Castra Maurorum and Singara.

Death

During the withdrawal, Julian's forces suffered several attacks from Sassanid forces. In one such engagement on 26 June 363, the indecisive Battle of Samarra near Maranga in Mesopotamia, Julian was wounded when the Sassanid army raided his column. In the haste of pursuing the retreating enemy, Julian chose speed rather than caution, taking only his sword and leaving his coat of mail. He received a wound from a spear that reportedly pierced the lower lobe of his liver and intestines. The wound was not immediately deadly. Julian was treated by his personal physician, Oribasius of Pergamum, who seems to have made every attempt to treat the wound; this probably included the irrigation of the wound with a dark wine, and a procedure known as *gastrorrhaphy—i.e.,* suturing of the damaged intestine. Despite these efforts, on the third day a major hemorrhage occurred and the emperor died during the night. Some Christian writers reported that his final words were "Thou hast conquered, Galilean." As Julian wished, his body was buried outside Tarsus, though it was later moved to Constantinople.

In 364, Libanius stated that Julian was assassinated by a Christian who was one of his own soldiers; this charge is not corroborated by Ammianus Marcellinus or other contemporary historians. John Malalas reports that the supposed assassination was commanded by Basil of Caesarea. Fourteen years later, Libanius said that Julian was killed by a Saracen (Lakhmid) and this may have been confirmed by Julian's doctor Oribasius who, having examined the wound, said that it was from a spear used by a group of Lakhmid auxiliaries in Persian service. Later Christian historians propagated the tradition that Julian was killed by Saint Mercurius.

Perso-Roman Peace Treaty of 363

The Peace Treaty of 363 between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sasanian Empire was the subsequent treaty from Emperor Julian's Persian expedition. Upon Julian's death, the newly elected Emperor Jovian was forced into signing a humiliating treaty by which territorial and diplomatic concessions were given to the Sasanians.

Background

Julian's Preparations

After his accession to the Roman throne in AD 361, Emperor Julian reinitiated the war against Sasanid Persia. Over the winter of 362–63 Julian established his headquarters in Antioch, and as soon as spring arrived he was ready to take the field. Within a month of his departure from Antioch, a force of around 80,000 had been assembled at Carrhae. This army under Julian marched swiftly south-east along the Euphrates river on route to Ctesiphon, the enemy capital. The remainder of the Roman forces, with the aid of the King of Armenia Arshak II, was ordered to effect a junction with the emperor before the walls of Ctesiphon, marching east by way of Nisibis and then south along the Tigris.

Progress of War

The southern arm of the Roman invasion met with some initial success. The Tigris was crossed, and the Sasanian army which contested its passage was defeated and penned up in Ctesiphon. After a vain attempt to penetrate further east to Susa, Julian was forced to abandon his fleet and most of his provisions, and was at length convinced that no option remained to him but a retreat.

On 26 June 363, during the Battle of Samarra, Julian was wounded. His death that night, and the subsequent election by the troops of Jovian as his successor, seemed to secure the end of the campaign. Jovian led the Roman legions to Dura. By the time they had arrived their provisions were exhausted and their attempts to cross the Tigris failed. Jovian, having no recourse, petitioned Shapur for peace.

Progress of the War

The terms of the treaty were:

- A thirty years truce.
- Roman influence in Armenia be renounced.
- Return of Arzanene, Moxoene, Zabdicene, Rehimena and Corduene to the Sasanian Empire.
- Surrender of Nisibis, Castra Maurorum and Singara to the Sasanian Empire.

Legacy

Julian was succeeded by the short-lived Emperor Jovian, who reestablished Christianity's privileged position throughout the Empire.

Libanius says in his epitaph of the deceased emperor (18.304) that "I have mentioned representations (of Julian); many cities have set him beside the images of the gods and honour him as they do the gods. Already a blessing has been besought of him in prayer, and it was not in vain. To such an extent has he literally ascended to the gods and received a share of their power from him themselves." However, no similar action was taken by the Roman central government, which would be more and more dominated by Christians in the ensuing decades.

Considered apocryphal is the report that his dying words were νενίκηκάς με, Γαλιλαῖε, or *Vicisti, Galilaee* ("You have won, Galilean"), supposedly expressing his recognition that, with his death, Christianity would become the Empire's state religion. The phrase introduces the 1866 poem "Hymn to Proserpine", which was Algernon Charles Swinburne's elaboration of what a philosophic pagan might have felt at the triumph of Christianity. It also ends the Polish Romantic play *The Undivine Comedy* written in 1833 by Zygmunt Krasiński.

Tomb

As he had requested, Julian's body was buried in Tarsus. It lay in a tomb outside the city, across a road from that of Maximinus Daia.

However, chronicler Zonaras says that at some "later" date his body was exhumed and reburied in or near the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, where Constantine and the rest of his family lay. His sarcophagus is listed as standing in a "stoa" there by Constantine VII. The church was demolished by the Ottomans after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Today a sarcophagus of porphyry, believed by Jean Ebersolt to be Julian's, stands in the grounds of the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Beliefs

Julian's personal religion was both pagan and philosophical; he viewed the traditional myths as allegories, in which the ancient gods were aspects of a philosophical divinity. The chief surviving sources are his works *To King Helios* and *To the Mother of the Gods*, which were written as panegyrics, not theological treatises.

As the last pagan ruler of the Roman Empire, Julian's beliefs are of great interest for historians, but they are not in complete agreement. He learned theurgy from Maximus of Ephesus, a student of Iamblichus; his system bears some resemblance to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus; Polymnia Athanassiadi has brought new attention to his relations with Mithraism, although whether he was initiated into it remains debatable; and certain aspects of his thought (such as his reorganization of paganism under High Priests, and his fundamental monotheism) may show Christian influence. Some of these potential sources have not come down to us, and all of them influenced each other, which adds to the difficulties.

According to one theory (that of Glen Bowersock in particular), Julian's paganism was highly eccentric and atypical because it was heavily influenced by an esoteric approach to Platonic philosophy sometimes identified as *theurgy* and also *Neoplatonism*. Others (Rowland Smith, in particular) have argued that Julian's philosophical perspective was nothing unusual for a "cultured" pagan of his time, and, at any rate, that Julian's paganism was not limited to philosophy alone, and that he was deeply devoted to the same gods and goddesses as other pagans of his day.

Because of his Neoplatonist background, Julian accepted the creation of humanity as described in Plato's *Timaeus*. Julian writes, "when Zeus was setting all things in order there fell from him drops of sacred blood, and from them, as they say, arose the race of men." Further he writes, "they who had the power to create one man and one woman only, were able to create many men and women at once..." His view contrasts with the Christian belief that humanity is derived from the one pair, Adam and Eve. Elsewhere he argues against the single pair origin, indicating his disbelief, noting for example, "how very different in their bodies are the Germans and Scythians from the Libyans and Ethiopians."

The Christian historian Socrates Scholasticus was of the opinion that Julian believed himself to be Alexander the Great "in another body" via transmigration of souls, "in accordance with the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato".

The diet of Julian is said to have been predominantly vegetable-based.

Restoration of State Paganism

After gaining the purple, Julian started a religious reformation of the empire, which was intended to restore the lost strength of the Roman state. He supported the restoration of Hellenistic polytheism as the state religion. His laws tended to target wealthy and educated Christians, and his aim was not to destroy Christianity but to drive the religion out of "the governing classes of the empire —much as Chinese Buddhism was driven back into the lower classes by a revived Confucian mandarinate in 13th century China."

He restored pagan temples which had been confiscated since Constantine's time, or simply appropriated by wealthy citizens; he repealed the stipends that Constantine had awarded to Christian bishops, and removed their other privileges, including a right to be consulted on appointments and to act as private courts. He also reversed some favors that had previously been given to Christians. For example, he reversed Constantine's declaration that Majuma, the port of Gaza, was a separate city. Majuma had a large Christian congregation while Gaza was still predominantly pagan.

On 4 February 362, Julian promulgated an edict to guarantee freedom of religion. This edict proclaimed that all the religions were equal before the law, and that the Roman Empire had to return to its original religious eclecticism, according to which the Roman state did not impose any religion on its provinces. The edict was seen as an act of favor toward the Jews, in order to upset the Christians.

Since the persecution of Christians by past Roman Emperors had seemingly only strengthened Christianity, many of Julian's actions may have been designed to harass Christians and undermine their ability to organize resistance to the re-establishment of paganism in the empire. Julian's preference for a non-Christian and non-philosophical view of Iamblichus' theurgy seems to have convinced him that it was right to outlaw the Christian liturgy and demand the suppression of the Christian Holy Mysteries (Sacraments).

In his *School Edict*, Julian required that all public teachers be approved by the Emperor; the state paid or supplemented much of their salaries. Ammianus Marcellinus explains this as intending to prevent Christian teachers from using pagan texts (such as the *Iliad*, which was widely regarded as divinely inspired)[*citation needed*] that formed the core of classical education: "If they want to learn literature, they have Luke and Mark: Let them go back to their churches and expound on them", the edict says. This was an attempt to remove some of the influence of the Christian schools which at that time and later used ancient Greek literature in their teachings in their effort to present the Christian religion as being superior to paganism.[*citation needed*] The edict also dealt a severe financial blow to many Christian scholars, tutors, and teachers, as it deprived them of students.

In his *Tolerance Edict* of 362, Julian decreed the reopening of pagan temples, the restitution of confiscated temple properties, and the return from exile of "heretical" Christian bishops who had been censured or excommunicated by the Church. The latter was an instance of tolerance of different religious views, but it may also have been an attempt by Julian to foster schisms and divisions between his Christian rivals, since disputes over what constituted orthodox Catholic teaching could become quite fierce.

Paganism's Shift under Julian

Julian's popularity among the people and the army during his brief reign suggest that he might have brought paganism back to the fore of Roman public and private life. In fact, during his lifetime, neither pagan nor Christian ideology reigned supreme, and the greatest thinkers of the day argued about the merits and rationality of each religion. Most importantly for the pagan cause, though, Rome was still a predominantly pagan empire that had not wholly accepted Christianity.

Even so, Julian's short reign did not stem the tide of Christianity. The emperor's ultimate failure can arguably be attributed to the many religious traditions and deities that paganism promulgated. Most pagans sought religious affiliations that were unique to their culture and people, and they had internal divisions that prevented them from creating any one 'pagan religion'. Indeed, the term pagan was simply a convenient appellation for Christians to lump together the believers of a system they opposed. In truth, there was no Roman religion, as modern observers would recognize it. Instead, paganism came from a system of observances that one historian has characterized as "no more than a spongy mass of tolerance and tradition".

This system of tradition had already shifted dramatically by the time Julian came to power; gone were the days of massive sacrifices honoring the gods. The communal festivals that involved sacrifice and feasting, which once united communities, now tore them apart—Christian against pagan. Civic leaders did not even have the funds, much less the support, to hold religious festivals. Julian found the financial base that had supported these ventures (sacred temple funds) had been seized by his uncle Constantine to support the Christian Church. In all, Julian's short reign simply could not shift the feeling of inertia that had swept across the Empire. Christians had denounced sacrifice, stripped temples of their funds, and cut priests and magistrates off from the social prestige and financial benefits accompanying leading pagan positions in the past. Leading politicians and civic leaders had little motivation to rock the boat by reviving pagan festivals. Instead, they chose to adopt the middle ground by having ceremonies and mass entertainment that were religiously neutral.

After witnessing the reign of two emperors bent on supporting the Church and stamping out paganism, it is understandable that pagans simply did not embrace Julian's idea of proclaiming their devotion to polytheism and their rejection of Christianity. Many chose to adopt a practical approach and not support Julian's public reforms actively for fear of a Christian revival. However, this apathetic attitude forced the emperor to shift central aspects of pagan worship. Julian's attempts to reinvigorate the people shifted the focus of paganism from a system of tradition to a religion with some of the same characteristics that he opposed in Christianity. For example, Julian attempted to introduce a tighter organization for the priesthood, with greater qualifications of character and service. Classical paganism simply did not accept this idea of priests as model citizens. Priests were elites with social prestige and financial power who organized festivals and helped pay for them. His attempts to create philanthropic institutions to rival the charitable activities of Christians were also unsuccessful, and Julian's attempt to impose moral strictness on the civic position of priesthood only made paganism more in tune with Christian morality, drawing it further from paganism's system of tradition.

Indeed, this development of a pagan order created the foundations of a bridge of reconciliation over which paganism and Christianity could meet. Likewise, Julian's persecution of Christians, who by pagan standards were simply part of a different cult, was quite an un-pagan attitude that transformed paganism into a religion that accepted only one form of religious experience while excluding all others—such as Christianity. In trying to compete with Christianity in this manner, Julian fundamentally changed the nature of pagan worship. That is, he made paganism a religion, whereas it once had been only a system of tradition.

Juventinus and Maximus

Many of the Church fathers viewed the emperor with hostility, and told stories of his supposed wickedness after his death. A sermon by Saint John Chrysostom, entitled *On Saints Juventinus and Maximinus,* tells the story of two of Julian's soldiers at Antioch, who were overheard at a drinking party, criticizing the emperor's religious policies, and taken into custody. According to Chrysostom, the emperor had made a deliberate effort to avoid creating martyrs of those who disagreed with his reforms; but Juventinus and Maximinus admitted to being Christians, and refused to moderate their stance. Chrysostom asserts that the emperor forbade anyone from having contact with the men, but that nobody obeyed his orders; so he had the two men executed in the middle of the night. Chrysostom urges his audience to visit the tomb of these martyrs.

Charity

The fact that Christian charities were open to all, including pagans, put this aspect of Roman citizens' lives out of the control of Imperial authority and under that of the Church. Thus Julian envisioned the institution of a Roman philanthropic system, and cared for the behaviour and the morality of the pagan priests, in the hope that it would mitigate the reliance of pagans on Christian charity, saying: *"These impious Galileans not only feed their own poor, but ours also; welcoming them into their agapae, they attract them, as children are attracted, with cakes."*

Restoration of Paganism from Julian until Valens

The restoration of paganism from Julian until Valens was a brief period, from 361 until 375, of relative tolerance towards pagans in the Roman Empire. In the late Roman Empire, it was preceded by a period of persecutions under Emperor Constantius II and was followed by those of Emperor Gratian. The attempt of Emperor Julian the Apostate (reigned in 361—363) to restore pagan worship in the empire, while ultimately a policy failure, restored security to pagans. His immediate successors (from 363 until 375), under the reigns of Jovian, Valens and Valentinian I, had a policy of relative religious toleration towards paganism.

Background

Julian was Roman co-emperor since 355, and ruled solely for 18 months 361–363. Known to Christians as "Julian the Apostate", he was a nephew of Constantine the Great and received a Christian training. Following the death of Constantine, he witnessed the assassination of his father, brother and other family members by the guards of the imperial palace. Rightly or wrongly, he blamed this brutal act on the Emperor Constantius I and by association, to Christians in general. This antipathy deepened when Constantius executed Julian's only remaining brother in 354AD. After childhood, Julian was educated by Hellenists and was attracted to the teachings of neoplatonists and the old religions. Upon becoming emperor, Julian decided to restore paganism, the ancient Roman religion, while reforming it in the hope of making it the driving force behind the empire. Julian's religious beliefs were syncretic and he was an initiate of at least three mystery religions. But Julian's religious open-mindedness did not extend to Christianity due to its belief that it had an exclusive perspective on religious truth. Believing itself to be the "only true religion", Christianity was fundamentally incompatible with syncretic paganism.

As emperor, Julian sought to turn the tide in the attempted suppression of non-Christian religions. Julian allowed religious freedom and avoided any form of actual compulsion. The Christian Sozomen acknowledges that Julian did not compel Christians to offer sacrifice nor did he allow the people to commit any act of injustice towards the Christians or insult them. However, no Christian was allowed to teach or study the ancient classical authors, "Let them keep to Matthew and Luke", thus ending any chance they had of a professional career. He did not believe Christians could honestly teach subjects replete with allusions to Greek deities whose existence they denied. The Jewish historian and theologian Jacob Neusner writes: "It was only after the near catastrophe of Julian's reversion to paganism that the Christian emperors systematically legislated against paganism so as to destroy it."

"In the eighteen brief months that he ruled between 361 and 363, Julian did not persecute [Christians], as a hostile tradition contends. But he did make clear that the partnership between Rome and Christian bishops forged by Constantine and maintained, despite conflicts over goals, by his son Constantius II, was now at an end, replaced by a government that defined its interests and those of Christianity as antithetical."

Religious Toleration under Jovian, Valentinian and Valens

Julian's successor – Jovian – seems to have instituted a policy of religious toleration which avoided the extremes of Julian. Under Valentinian and Valens, this period of religious toleration continued. Pagan writers praised both emperors for their liberal religious policies. Valentinian, who ruled in the west, seems to have only been a halfhearted Christian as he avoided attending his inaugural ceremony by twenty-four hours in order to avoid an inauspicious day (the intercalary day of the bissextile year). Valentinian and Valens granted complete toleration for all cults at the beginning of their reign in 364. Valentinian even allowed the performance of nocturnal sacrifices, which had been previously prohibited due to the attempt of some people to practice unlawful divination under the cover of the night, after the proconsul of Greece appealed to him. Valentinian also confirmed the rights and privileges of the pagan priests and confirmed the right of pagans to be the exclusive caretakers of their temples. Valens, who ruled in the east, was an Arian and was too engaged with fighting against Orthodox Christians to bother much with the pagans. In both west and east, severe laws were once again passed prohibiting private divination. Due to the over-zealousness of the populace to stop harmful divination, the haruspices and augurs began to be afraid to show themselves in public. This led the emperors to formally authorize the practice of official and lawful divination by law in 371.

Attemp to rebuild the Jewish Temple

In 363, not long before Julian left Antioch to launch his campaign against Persia, in keeping with his effort to oppose Christianity, he allowed Jews to rebuild their temple. The point was that the rebuilding of the temple would invalidate Jesus' prophecy about its destruction in 70, which Christians had cited as proof of Jesus' truth. But fires broke out and stopped the project. A personal friend of his, Ammianus Marcellinus, wrote this about the effort:

> *Julian thought to rebuild at an extravagant expense the proud Temple once at Jerusalem, and committed this task to Alypius of Antioch. Alypius set vigorously to work, and was seconded by the governor of the province; when fearful balls of fire, breaking out near the foundations, continued their attacks, till the workmen, after repeated scorchings, could approach no more: and he gave up the attempt.*

The failure to rebuild the Temple may be ascribed to the Galilee earthquake of 363. In the contemporary Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen, the builders were described as "being driven against one another, as though by a furious blast of wind, and sudden heaving of the earth" driving some to seek refuge in a church where "a flame issued forth... and stopped them." This, according to Gregory, is "what all people nowadays report and believe." The 18th century writer Edward Gibbon considered this to be unreliable, positing instead sabotage or accident. Divine intervention is a common view among Christian historians, and it was seen as proof of Jesus' divinity.

Julian's support of Jews caused Jews to call him "Julian the Hellene". However, it is believed by most historians that Julian's favor towards the Jews was more of an attempt to impede the growth of Christianity as opposed to any genuine affection towards Judaism.

WORKS

Julian wrote several works in Greek, some of which have survived to the modern day.

Budé	Date	Work	Comment	Wright
I	356/7	*Panegyric in Honour of Constantius*	Written to reassure Constantius that he was on his side.	I
II	~June 357	*Panegyric in Honour of Eusebia*	Expresses gratitude for Eusebia's support.	III
III	357/8	*The Heroic Deeds of Constantius*	Indicates his support of Constantius, while being critical. (Sometimes called "second panegyric to Constantius".)	—
IV	359	*Consolation Upon the Departure of Salutius*	Grapples with the removal of his close advisor in Gaul.	VIII
V	361	*Letter to the Senate and People of Athens*	An attempt to explain the actions leading up to his rebellion.	–
VI	early 362	*Letter to Themistius the Philosopher*	Response to an ingratiating letter from Themistius, outlining Julian's political reading.	–
VII	March 362	*To the Cynic Heracleios*	Attempt to set Cynics straight regarding their religious responsibilities.	VII
VIII	~March 362	*To the Mother of the Gods*	A defense of Hellenism and Roman tradition.	V
IX	~May 362	*To the Uneducated Cynics*	Another attack on Cynics who he thought didn't follow the principles of Cynicism.	VI
X	December 362	*The Caesars*	Satire describing a competition among Roman emperors as to who was the best. Strongly critical of Constantine.	–
XI	December 362	*To King Helios*	Attempt to describe the Roman religion as seen by Julian.	IV
XII	early 363	*Misopogon, or Beard-Hater*	Written as a satire on himself, while attacking the people of Antioch for their shortcomings.	–
–	362/3	*Against the Galileans*	Polemic against Christians, which now only survives as fragments.	–
–	362	*Fragment of a Letter to a Priest*	Attempt to counteract the aspects that he thought were positive in Christianity.	–
–	359–363	*Letters*	Both personal and public letters from much of his career.	–
–	?	*Epigrams*	Small number of short verse works.	–

→ Budé indicates the numbers used by Athanassiadi given in the Budé edition (1963 & 1964) of Julian's *Opera*.[viii]

→ Wright indicates the oration numbers provided in W. C. Wright's edition of Julian's works.

The religious works contain involved philosophical speculations, and the panegyrics to Constantius are formulaic and elaborate in style.

The *Misopogon* (or "Beard Hater") is a light-hearted account of Julian's clash with the inhabitants of Antioch after he was mocked for his beard and generally scruffy appearance for an emperor. *The Caesars* is a humorous tale of a contest between notable Roman emperors: Julius Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius and Constantine, with the competition also including Alexander the Great. This was a satiric attack upon the recent Constantine, whose worth, both as a Christian and as the leader of the Roman Empire, Julian severely questions.

One of the most important of his lost works is his *Against the Galileans*, intended to refute the Christian religion. The only parts of this work which survive are those excerpted by Cyril of Alexandria, who gives extracts from the three first books in his refutation of Julian, *Contra Julianum*. These extracts do not give an adequate idea of the work: Cyril confesses that he had not ventured to copy several of the weightiest arguments.

Problems regarding authenticity

Julian's works have been edited and translated several times since the Renaissance, most often separately; but many are translated in the Loeb Classical Library edition of 1913, edited by Wilmer Cave Wright. Wright mentions, however, that there are many problems surrounding Julian's vast collection of works, mainly the letters ascribed to Julian. The collections of letters existing today are the result of many smaller collections, which contained varying numbers of Julian's works in various combinations. For example, in Laurentianus 58.16, the largest collection of letters ascribed to Julian was found, containing 43 manuscripts. The origins of many letters in these collections are unclear.

Joseph Bidez and François Cumont compiled the different collections in 1922 and arrived at a total of 284 items. 157 of these were considered genuine, and 127 were regarded as spurious. This contrasts starkly with Wright's earlier mentioned collection, which contains only 73 items which are considered genuine, along with 10 apocryphal letters. Michael Trapp notes, however, that when comparing Bidez and Cumont's work with Wright's, Bidez and Cumont regard as many as sixteen of Wright's genuine letters as spurious. Which works can be ascribed to Julian is thus very much up to debate.

The problems surrounding a collection of Julian's works are exacerbated by the fact that Julian was a motivated writer, which means it is possible that many more letters could have circulated despite his short reign. Julian himself attests to the large number of letters he had to write in a letter that is itself likely to be genuine. Julian's religious agenda gave him even more work than the average emperor as he sought to instruct his newly styled pagan priests and dealt with discontented Christian leaders and communities. An example of him instructing his pagan priests is found in a fragment in the Vossianus MS., inserted in the Letter to Themistius.

Additionally, Julian's hostility towards the Christian faith inspired vicious counteractions by Christian authors, as in Gregory of Nazianzus' invectives against Julian. Christians no doubt suppressed some of Julian's works as well. This Christian influence is still visible in Wright's much smaller collection of Julian's letters. She comments that some letters are suddenly cut off when the contents become hostile towards Christians and believes this to be the result of Christian censorship. Notable examples appear in the *Fragment of a letter to a Priest* and the *letter to High-Priest Theodorus.*

IN POPULAR CULTURE

Literature

- The *Julian Romance* is a late antique Syriac romance of Julian's reign from a hostile Christian perspective.

- In 1681 Lord Russell, an outspoken opponent of King Charles II of England and his brother The Duke of York, got his chaplain to write a *Life of Julian the Apostate*. This work made use of the Roman Emperor's life in order to address contemporary English political and theological debates – specifically, to reply to the conservative arguments of Dr Hickes's sermons, and defend the lawfulness of resistance in extreme cases.

- In 1847, the controversial German theologian David Friedrich Strauss published in Mannheim the pamphlet *Der Romantiker auf dem Thron der Cäsaren* ("A Romantic on the Throne of the Caesars"), in which Julian was satirised as "an unworldly dreamer, a man who turned nostalgia for the ancients into a way of life and whose eyes were closed to the pressing needs of the present". In fact, this was a veiled criticism of the contemporary King Frederick William IV of Prussia, known for his romantic dreams of restoring the supposed glories of feudal Medieval society.

- Julian's life inspired the play *Emperor and Galilean* published in 1873 by Henrik Ibsen.

- The late nineteenth century English novelist George Gissing read an English translation of Julian's work in 1891.

- Julian's life and reign were the subject of the novel *The Death of the Gods (Julian the Apostate)* (1895) in the trilogy of historical novels entitled "Christ and Antichrist" (1895–1904) by the Russian Symbolist poet, novelist and literary theoretician Dmitrii S. Merezhkovskii.

- The opera *Der Apostat* (1924) by the composer and conductor Felix Weingartner is about Julian.

- In 1945, Nikos Kazantzakis authored the tragedy *Julian the Apostate* in which the emperor is depicted as an existentialist hero committed to a struggle which he knows will be in vain. It was first staged in Paris in 1948.

- The novel *Imperial Renegade* (1950), by Christian author Louis de Wohl.

- Julian was the subject of a novel, *Julian* (1964), by Gore Vidal, describing his life and times. It is notable for, among other things, its scathing critique of Christianity.

- Julian appeared in *Gods and Legions*, by Michael Curtis Ford (2002). Julian's tale was told by his closest companion, the Christian saint Caesarius, and accounts for the transition from a Christian philosophy student in Athens to a pagan Roman Augustus of the old nature.

- Julian's letters are an important part of the symbolism of Michel Butor's novel *La Modification*.

- The fantasy alternate history *The Dragon Waiting* by John M. Ford, while set in the time of the Wars of the Roses, uses the reign of Julian as its point of divergence. His reign not being cut short, he was successful in disestablishing Christianity and restoring a religiously eclectic societal order which survived the fall of Rome and into the Renaissance. Characters in the novel refer to him as "Julian the Wise".

- The dystopian speculative fiction novel by Robert Charles Wilson, *Julian Comstock: A Story of 22nd-Century America,* parallels the life of Julian with the titular character as the hereditary president of an oligarchic future United States of America who tries to restore science and combat the fundamentalist Christianity that has taken over the country.

- A student paper by the narrator fills out the center of the 2022 novel *Elizabeth Finch* by Julian Barnes.

- C.P. Cavafy wrote 6 poems about Julian in 1923–1935.

Film

- An Italian movie treatment of his life, *Giuliano l'Apostata*, was released in 1919.

Streets

During the British Mandate period in Jerusalem, 'Julian Way,' initially named after the Emperor, was later renamed King David Street after the establishment of the State of Israel.